

THE LUTHERAN 

APRIL 2014

AMBASSADOR



THE
MYSTERY
OF
GODLINESS

Before our King

BY ANDREW KNEELAND

David was the king of all Israel. Battles had been fought, armies had been killed, and the house of Saul had finally been defeated. With King David reigning from Jerusalem, and all Israel united under the same banner, God's chosen people were eager to move on from the pains of war.

But as the regime change took place, David summoned a young, crippled man named Mephibosheth to his court (II Samuel 9). Mephibosheth was one of Saul's last surviving descendants, one of the last living reminders of Israel's regrettable civil war.

On his way to see the king, I'm sure Mephibosheth was remembering all the grief his grandfather had caused David. He belonged to a sinful family, and was expecting to receive the punishment he felt he deserved.

But Mephibosheth was surprised by grace extended to him that day in David's court. The retelling of this event is a wonderful picture of the grace we undeservedly receive as we stand before our King.

Years before, when Mephibosheth's nurse heard the news of Saul's death, she dropped him in a panic, causing him to be lame in both feet. We, too, have been crippled by a fall. Ever since Adam's sin, and because of our continual failure to live up to God's perfect standards, we are unable to help ourselves. We are crippled in our attempts to please God.

But King David sought out the lame, undeserving Mephibosheth and called him to his court. Instead of giving him the death he deserved, David offered him a place at his table. David wasn't overlooking the sin of Saul's family, but he looked on



Mephibosheth with favor because of his father, Jonathan.

"Do not fear," David said to Mephibosheth in verse seven. "I will surely show kindness to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly."

Just like Mephibosheth, we aren't given what we deserve for our sin, nor have we earned our King's favor. It is given to us freely for the sake of another. Because of Jesus' perfect life and death, and His atonement for all our sins, our King looks on us with favor and is

willing to spare us from the death we deserve. Though we're lame and undeserving, Jesus will carry us to His table.

The band Leeland has a song called "Carried to the Table," referring to Mephibosheth's place at the table of David. The chorus says, "I was carried to the table, seated where I don't belong / Carried to the table, swept away by His love / And I don't see my brokenness anymore, when I'm seated at the table of the Lord."

II Samuel 9:11 says, "So Mephibosheth ate at David's table as one of the king's sons."

He was dumbfounded by David's grace. But when he was seated in the honorable position at the king's table, I'm sure no one paid much attention to Mephibosheth's lame, crippled feet anymore.

Our King offers us a spot at His table, too. And He'll even carry us there.

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Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection,
not in books alone but in every leaf of springtime.
—Martin Luther

Jesus rose again from the dead! All of our hopes rest upon that fact. Without that there is nothing but dreariness and hopelessness to which we may look forward. Our loved ones are gone, to be seen no more. Children who have died will never be held again. There is no hope beyond the mortician's bench. The darkness, the silence of the tomb, is the final abode of all.

—D. James Kennedy

Christian faith is hope resting on fact—namely, the fact that Jesus rose bodily from the grave and now lives eternally in heaven. The hope is that when Jesus comes back—the day when history stops and this world ends—he will “change our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21).

—J.I. Packer

We live and die; Christ died and lived!

—John Stott

Jesus Christ our Lord surrendered in order that He might win; He destroyed His enemies by dying for them and conquered death by allowing death to conquer Him.

—A.W. Tozer

“Beyond all question, the
mystery from which true
godliness springs is great ...”

(I Timothy 3:16)

Vance Havner, an evangelist of another era, once said: “Too many church members are starched and ironed, but not washed.” He, of course, was speaking of the visible church. But those who are the blood-washed, and the cleansed-by-the-washing-of-regeneration (Titus 3:5) comprise the invisible church. They know truth and live to make it known.

In I Timothy 3:15 the apostle Paul had hoped to come to Ephesus to be with Timothy. However, if Paul was delayed, he wanted Timothy to know “how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God” which he described as “the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth” (I Timothy 3:15). “Pillar” would resonate with Timothy. He was in Ephesus, the home of the Temple of Diana, which boasted 127 pillars holding up the roof structure. In addition, these were also used as places to post notices for the community. So a pillar became a proclaimer of news (*Believer’s Bible Commentary*, by William MacDonald). The “support” was the foundation upon which the structure rested. Timothy learned that the Church is the foundation and pillar that holds up and heralds glorious truth.

In v. 16 Paul writes about a *mega musterion*, that is, a great mystery. The word “mystery” has nothing to do with reading the latest mystery thriller or with trying to figure out where you left your keys. Instead, this mystery refers to “truth once hidden but now revealed by God” (Colossians 1:26). Truth not known in the past now revealed in the present. It is mega because it is huge, important truth. Every true believer (“by common confession”) is convinced of this truth. It can only be known by God’s gracious revelation through His Word.

The lines that follow in v. 16 are apparently from an early church hymn and feature six verbs, according to John MacArthur’s Bible study on I and II Timothy. Three parallel statements are made. The first parallel is between the flesh and the Spirit, the second is between the angels and the nations, and the third is between the world and glory. The content of the hymn points to Jesus, the Son of God. He was the One “who was revealed in the flesh, vindicated in the Spirit; seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations; believed on in the world, and taken up in glory.” This is a brief, but powerful synopsis of the life of God with flesh on, Jesus Christ. He is the only Savior!

Therefore, the mystery of godliness, first, is Jesus. His glory is unveiled in the New Testament as the Holy Spirit reveals Him. At

the same time, the speculation of human reasoning is revealed for what it is—a futile attempt to know truth apart from the One who is Truth.

Second, the mystery of godliness refers to those saved, who are godly in Christ. Jesus revealed God, the Father, when He was on earth. The true Church reveals God’s Son to the world. The blood-washed proclaim the blood.

As Paul indicated (v. 15), the church of the living God is the foundation. That is, the family (“household”) of God will be intent on preserving the truth from error. Moreover, the church is the pillar proclaiming truth with passion.

Vernon Grounds tells this story in *Selling Jesus* by Douglas Webster:

One night Arturo Toscanini, perhaps the most dynamic of modern maestros, led a simply spine-tingling rendition of Beethoven’s masterpiece, the Ninth Symphony. The audience clapped, whistled, and stomped their feet. Toscanini bowed and bowed and bowed. He signaled to the orchestra, and its members stood to acknowledge the wild applause.

Eventually, of course, the pandemonium began to subside, and with the ebbing applause as background, Toscanini turned and looked intently at his musicians. With almost wild emotion he exclaimed, “Gentlemen! Gentlemen!” The men in the orchestra leaned forward to listen. They were concerned. Was he angry? Had the orchestra flawed the performance?

No. Toscanini was not angry. Toscanini was stirred to the very depths of his being by the sheer magnificence of the Beethoven music. Hardly able to talk, he said in a fierce whisper, “Gentlemen, I am nothing.”

Then he said, “Gentlemen, you are nothing!” (That was not exactly news. The members of the orchestra had often heard the same message in rehearsal!)

“But Beethoven,” said Toscanini in a tone of adoration, “is everything, everything, everything!”

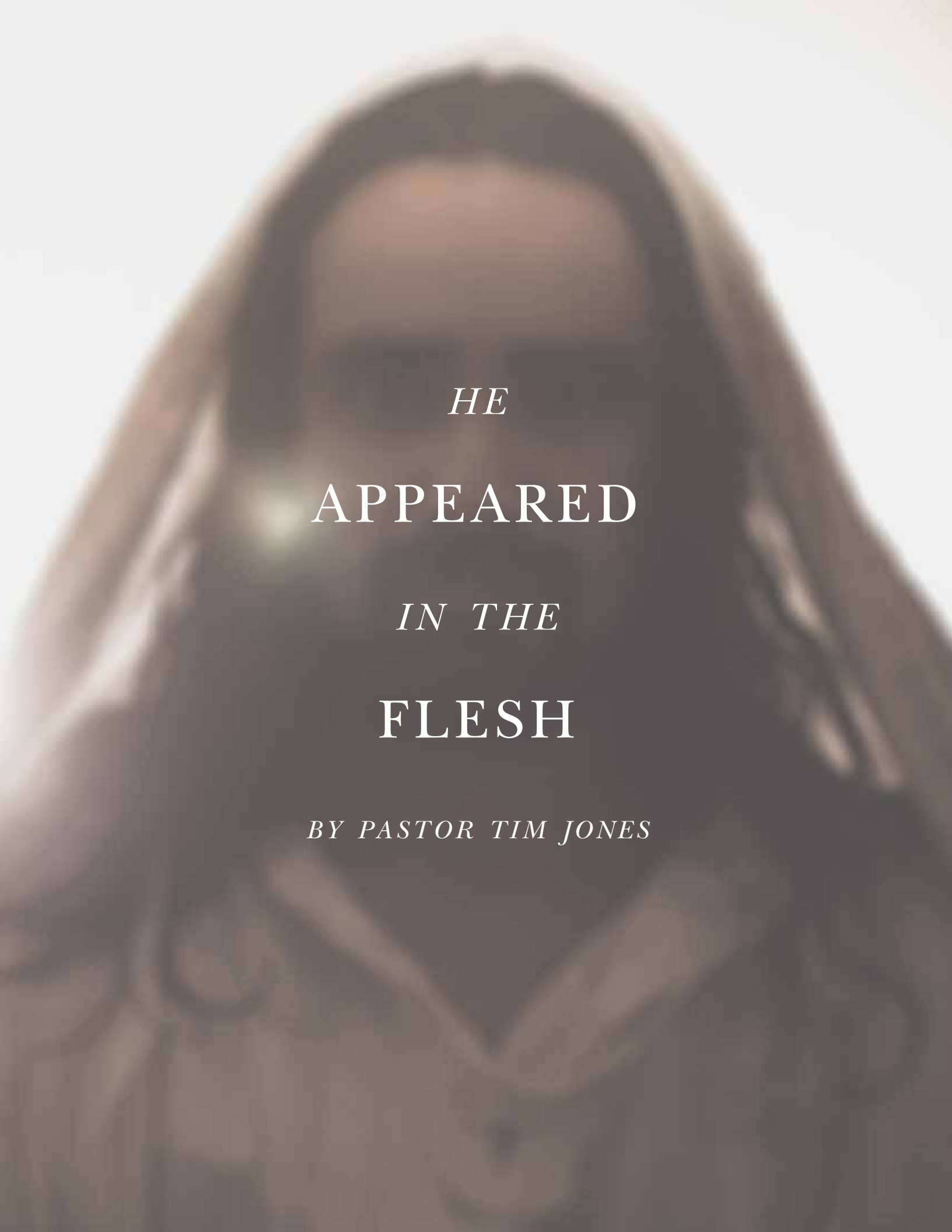
Indeed, Jesus Christ is everything, everything, everything! He is “the mystery of godliness” now revealed and joyfully proclaimed by His people!

Lombardo serves St. Paul’s Lutheran, Gifford, Ill.



THE
MYSTERY
OF
GODLINESS

BY PASTOR STEVEN LOMBARDO



HE
APPEARED
IN THE
FLESH

BY PASTOR TIM JONES

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.”

(Hebrews 4:15)

The Man” is a term sometimes used to refer to men who are well respected or victorious in a particular endeavor. Yet in spite of their earthly success, these men pale in comparison to the only perfect man who ever lived—Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

We believe and confess that this Jesus is the Son of God. God’s Word also teaches that Jesus was a human being, a man. The recognition and belief that Jesus was a true man is vital to our correct understanding of His person and His purpose.

In his first letter to his protégé Timothy, the Apostle Paul writes concerning the reality and mystery of Jesus being both God and man. “Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh ...” (I Timothy 3:16, ESV).

The New Living Translation presents it this way, “Christ was revealed in a human body.” But as some say, Jesus did not simply inhabit a human body like a spirit might (as we see in the Gospel accounts of demonic spirits). Like us, He was fully flesh and blood, a complete human being, yet also the Son of God at the same time.

Reading about the person of Jesus Christ, it is easy to focus on the miraculous and lose sight of His everyday struggles as a real man. Jesus was born of a woman as a baby, grew up, ate, slept, cried, walked, suffered, and bled as we do. He lived among people and was so much like them, many could not believe He was, in fact, the Son of God (see John 1:14-18).

At one point when seeking to put Jesus to death, people said “It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God” (John 10:33). The people around Jesus every day believed He was a regular person, a human being, just like them, just like us.

Recently, I have been battling a stubborn sinus infection. The Bible never indicates if Jesus ever had a nagging cold or flu, but we do know He endured one thing common to them, and that is fatigue. Few things reveal flaws in our character like fatigue. When we are fatigued, both our patience and our tempers can be short, which can easily lead to sinful behavior. But even fatigued, Jesus never sinned.

Hebrews 4:15 teaches us, “This High Priest of ours [Jesus] understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same testings we do, yet He did not sin” (NLT). Facing the same temptations as you and I, Jesus never gave in, not once. Even the chief tempter, Satan himself, was unable to entice Jesus into disappointing His Heavenly Father (see Matthew 4:1-11). For me, this makes Jesus alone “The Man.”

Were Jesus not a real man, we could easily think God would be unable to relate to us. Instead, we know that by God’s grace, He knows and understands what it is really like to be human. This is one of the reasons that the passages from I Timothy 3:16 and Hebrews 4:15 encourage and inspire me. Through them, and others, I know that I have a Savior who can fully relate to what it is like to be me and yet still resist temptation and never waver from His commitment to please His Heavenly Father.

In addition, had Jesus not been fully human, His death would not have atoned for our sins. The Apostle Paul wrote, “For as by the one man’s disobedience [Adam] the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience [Jesus] the many will be made righteous” (Romans 5:19). Thankfully, Jesus’ purpose to save and redeem us was never compromised.

We must be on the lookout for others who diminish the humanity of Jesus. Their flawed thinking may influence our own understanding of the truth about Jesus. As Jesus’ beloved disciple John wrote, “By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God ...” (I John 4:2-3).

Let us hold tightly to the truth that though He never sinned, Jesus Christ was indeed a human being as we are, and yet fully also the Son of God, the One—The Man—sent to save us from sin and through whom alone we receive the glorious gift of eternal life.

Jones serves Community Lutheran, Oceanside, Calif.

“... who through the Spirit of holiness
was appointed the Son of God in
power by his resurrection from the
dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.”
(Romans 1:4)

We confess a mystery. Not a body in the library or a clue that leads to buried treasure. But a wonder, revealed little by little over the ages in glimpses given by the Spirit. Now, come among us in full glory.

Simply put, the mystery is Christ (Colossians 2:2). Even “before the foundation of the world,” our Father in heaven determined that His only Son would come, live, die, and rise again. Our death would be His, His life would be ours. The prophets hinted at this and the apostles expounded upon it. By the time Paul penned the words of I Timothy 3:16—“Great indeed [...] is the mystery of godliness”—this mystery was hardly what we would call mysterious. It was taught on street corners and in synagogues, around dinner tables and throughout the letters which would pass from hand to hand and become much of our New Testament. Yet the life-changing reality of knowing Jesus is so rich and deep that even when it is common knowledge, it still remains a mystery—something only God alone could imagine, bring to pass, and persuade us to believe.

This mystery contains both the practical and the poetic. In between advice about the nitty-gritty of being part of the church, Paul slips in his reference to the mystery and then exults in the words of what was probably an early hymn. Among these lines, we read that Jesus was “vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels” (I Timothy 3:16). Whatever does this mean?

Of all the things that could be said about Jesus, why the cryptic phrase “vindicated by the Spirit”? As followers of Christ, we are “washed” and “justified [...] by the Spirit of our God” (I Corinthians 6:11). If our Savior never sinned, however, why would *He* need to share our experience? This is essentially the same question John the Baptizer asked when his cousin, Jesus, came to him to be baptized. Despite John’s doubts as to His purpose, Jesus certainly was vindicated that day, for when He rose from the water “the Holy Spirit descended on Him” and a voice from heaven proclaimed, “You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased” (Luke 3:22). Before all those gathered there, the Father declared Himself perfectly satisfied.

Because of this scene, John could later bear witness that Jesus was indeed the one to baptize with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33). Born of the Spirit—without the sinful nature which plagues mankind—Jesus never needed to beg God using the words of Psalm 51: “renew a right spirit within me,” “take not Your Holy Spirit from me,” and “uphold me with a willing spirit” (10-12). When the Lord weighed His spirit, He was never found wanting.

Yet on the cross when Jesus bore our sins, He could only utter

the cry of the God-forsaken—“*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*”—and entrust His spirit to God, who searches hearts (Matthew 27:46; Luke 23:46). Then, more than ever before, Jesus needed to be vindicated, proved blameless once and for all. To remove all doubt, God raised Him from the dead.

When thinking about this vindication of Jesus, I could not ignore the triumphant words of Micah 7:8-9: “Rejoice not over me, O my enemy; when I fall, I shall rise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me. I will bear the indignation of the Lord because I have sinned against Him, until He pleads my cause and executes judgment for me. He will bring me out to the light; I shall look upon His vindication.” These verses picture the death-to-life experience of the redeemed, an experience which merely reflects the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. After bearing God’s wrath for our sins, Jesus stepped into the full light of glory and sat down in power at the right hand of God, completely “vindicated by the Spirit” (Romans 1:4; I Timothy 3:16). From that exalted place, He poured out the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:33). Even now, the Spirit pleads His cause, declaring in our hearts that Jesus is God in the flesh (I John 4:2).

Then what is the meaning of “seen by angels”? Angels were certainly present at some of the most pivotal moments of Jesus’ life on earth: His birth, temptation, resurrection, and ascension. These heavenly beings are described as watching and witnessing in more places than I Timothy, however. The drama of the saved sinner is savored by angels in Luke 15:10, while angels serve as part of the audience when Jesus confesses the names of those who conquer in Revelation 3:5. Angels especially “long to look” into the great mystery of “the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories,” but had to wait for the gradual revealing through the prophets (I Peter 1:11-12). More pointedly, angels now see the resurrected Jesus “at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” where He reigns over them (Hebrews 1:3-4; I Peter 3:22).

Since we, too, are raised with Christ, this resurrection means that we “seek the things that are above” (Colossians 3:1). This is the mystery of godliness. Death has no victory, nor does it sting (I Corinthians 15:55-56). Jesus has triumphed. At first glance, I Timothy 3:16 seems daunting—the very stuff of mystery. After puzzling it out, though, it’s simple, really. It’s Jesus ... risen for our sakes and for His glory.

Paige is a Home Missions Parish Worker serving Calvary Free Lutheran, Mesa, Ariz.



VINDICATED

BY THE

SPIRIT

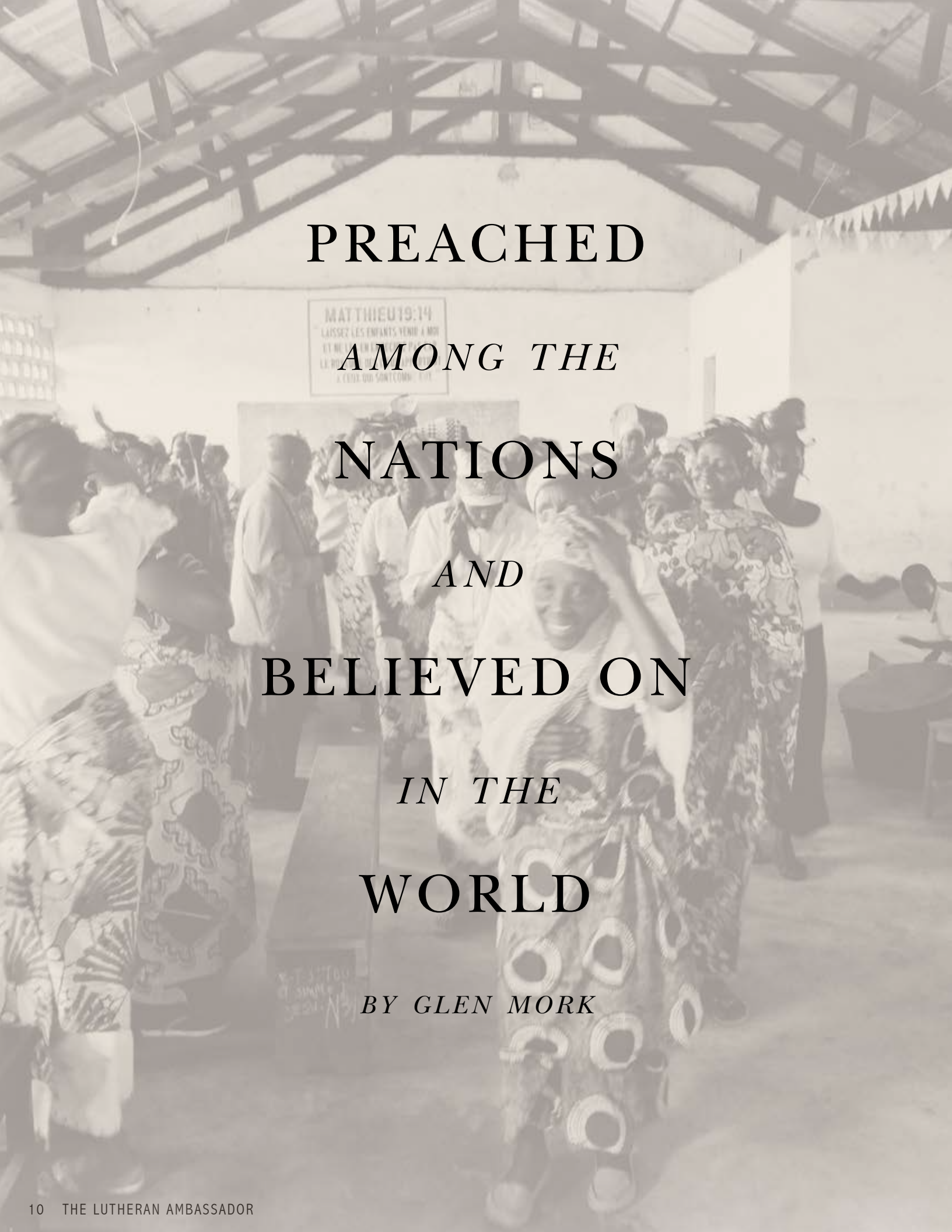
AND

SEEN

BY

ANGELS

BY KAYLA PAIGE



PREACHED
AMONG THE
NATIONS
AND
BELIEVED ON
IN THE
WORLD

BY GLEN MORK

“In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

(I Peter 1:3)

T

he risen Savior. The hope of the world. The resurrected Jesus. The empty tomb. Go and tell the world that hope lives!

The message of the completed work of the cross has no bounds. It is a message for all people, and must be proclaimed among the nations. The completed work of Christ opens the gates of eternity to every believer. Because Christ took the weight of our sins on the cross and the tomb is empty, the battle done, we have the promise of forgiven sins. We can anticipate heaven with a heart full of joy.

This glorious future awaits us because the victory has been won. The cross and tomb are empty of Jesus' body, but full of God's promises—full of hope for you, me, and the entire world. Hope lives!

Our resurrected Jesus is alive and actively working today in our midst. He is the authority behind every mission effort. He is the guide and motivator, stirring disciples to be involved with Him in His will and purpose to share this profound message throughout the world. He empowered the early church to develop an eternal perspective and proclaim this redeeming love to a needy world: “With great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:33). Mary Magdalene proclaimed, “I have seen the Lord” (John 20:18). The disciples claimed, “We have seen the Lord” (John 20:25). The mystery of, “How could it be?” became, “It is true! The Lord lives!”

In my travels to share this love of Jesus and this proclamation of hope with the orphans and widows in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, I have seen with fresh eyes the need for the resurrection story to be manifested in the hearts of these children of God. They need to know that hope lives.

They experience intense worldly struggles, amplifying the need to journey through this life with an eternal perspective. Each time I have met with the Women in Development, a ministry of Hope Centers for Children of Africa, I have wondered how I can even begin to relate to their struggles. How can I connect with them? How can I reach out to these lovely women who live such a different life from me and speak different languages? I am only with them for such a short time and then we are separated by a great distance.

But God continues to show me we share a common language. Philippians 2:2 says that Christians are “of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord ...” The language of God's love spans across the world.

On one of my recent visits I distributed a small wall hanging of a brightly colored cross to each of the women as a reminder of God's love and the hope in which we believe. The words “faith, hope, love, peace, joy and grace” were written in English, Swahili, and French, surrounding the cross. As I gave one to each of the women, I realized that while they speak Swahili and French, many of them cannot read or write. As women, most of them have not had a formal education. As we shared these words of promise with them, they understood and repeated the words back to us. Yet it was another reminder to me of the difficulties they encounter.

When Jesus appeared among His disciples after His resurrection, He said to them, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). He lives to proclaim peace. He wants us to be actively involved with Him in sharing His peace and proclaiming the amazing story of His profound love.

Despite their difficult earthly plight and struggles, the women of the Congo seem to have an unshakeable faith and confidence. They have been told the truth based on the sure word of prophecy left for us in the Scriptures. They have heard the story. They believe!

Their joy overflows freely in song and dance as they praise the Lord by singing, “*Naenda Kanana*” (I am going to Canaan). I love to hear them sing of that journey to Canaan, the Promised Land. They sing and dance with their hands above their heads as though they are carrying the weight of their burdensome products along the road. They rejoice because they know that when this journey is over, God will lift those burdens forevermore.

This life is a journey, rough as it may be, but the destination is heaven-bound for eternity because our hope lives.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (I Peter 1:3).

Mork, Buffalo, Minn., a member of the World Missions Committee, is the executive director for the Hope Centers for Children of Africa.

“... but He, having offered
one sacrifice for sins for all
time, sat down at the right
hand of God”

(Hebrews 10:12)

One should never sit down until the job is done. Oh, how hard it is to get your motivation back once you've allowed yourself to relax. This is especially true if the environment surrounding your task is harsh or uncomfortable. Oh, how many times have I wished that I would have finished my winter chores and postponed that coffee break? I wonder how many tasks have gone unfinished, simply because someone stopped prematurely, and sat down before the job was done.

This principle is actually based on biblical truth, as exemplified by Jesus Himself. Repeatedly, we are told that Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father in heaven, but not until He had fulfilled His mission. Consider Hebrews 10:11-12: “Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God.”

We sometimes have the mistaken idea that Jesus' goal was getting to the cross; that He just needed to get through that horrendous experience and then rise again. We see a hint of this mistaken perspective as Jesus interacts with Mary in the garden, post resurrection:

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary!’ She turned and said to Him in Hebrew, ‘Rabboni!’ (which means, Teacher). Jesus said to her, ‘Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God’”” (John 20:16-17).

Jesus had endured the agonizing beating and crucifixion process, successfully offering Himself as the sacrifice for all sin past, present, and future. He had made His victorious presentation in hell, as we declare in our creeds. He had risen triumphantly from the dead, standing boldly as the conquering Christos Victor. But yet he tells Mary, “Stop clinging to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father ... I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.” Mary's fear of losing Jesus forever in death had been transformed into sheer delight by His reappearance in resurrection.

She never wanted to let Him go again. But Jesus tells her, “You can't hold onto me, not like this.” Why?

The biblical commentator Richard H. C. Lenski observes, “She (Mary) must know that Jesus has not come back into his former life ... He will ascend to the Father; he is now in a new state ... No; she will not lose him after all. He will be nearer than ever to her then, seated at God's right hand and thus forever with all those who are his (Matthew 28:20). And this blessed news is not for Mary alone but for all the disciples, who certainly cannot receive it too soon.”

It is true that from a material perspective, Jesus' battle against the satanic forces of darkness had come to an end. He was victorious and now stood before Mary as both Lord and Christ. But He was not yet “taken up in glory.” While still on earth, He would only be able to help those who were in His immediate proximity. But from His throne in glory, seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, Jesus could attend to all people, in all places, and for all time. As Paul writes in Romans 8:34, “Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.”

Paul wrote in I Timothy 3:15 that the points found in verse 16 should instruct Timothy on “how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God.” Similarly, Jesus told Mary to “... go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’” Why? Because when we truly understand that the crucified, risen *and ascended* Jesus Christ now sits at the right hand of the Father in glory, it should—no, it *must*—transform how we “conduct ourselves” in God's family. Jesus promised His disciples (and in turn, us), “... lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20). This means that each of us, as sons and daughters of the ascended King, have a Savior who is above all circumstances and trials, acting on our behalf to redeem and empower us in all things and for all eternity.

Johnson serves Disciple Lutheran Fellowship, Reading, Pa., and Living Faith Lutheran, Boyertown, Pa.

TAKEN

UP IN

GLORY

BY PASTOR DAVID JOHNSON



“... if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain. Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of God, because we testified against God that He raised Christ, whom He did not raise, ... and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead ...”

(I Corinthians 15:14-15, 17-20)

Has it ever been suggested to you that the whole Christian faith is based on a hoax, and that Jesus Christ never even existed, or if He did exist, then at least the part about Him rising from the dead is just a myth? The Apostle Paul writes to the people of Corinth with very straightforward answers to such perspectives. He begins I Corinthians 15 by listing four firm facts of history:

First, Jesus died. This, of course, would assume that He lived before He died. Those who claim He never lived certainly have their blinders on. Jesus is recorded in history all over the place.

Josh McDowell, in *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, after citing several non-biblical early historians who mention Jesus, then summarizes his findings by quoting from the 1974 edition of *Encyclopedia Britannica*, “these independent accounts prove that in ancient times even opponents of Christianity never doubted the historic-

ity of Jesus, which was disputed for the first time and on inadequate grounds by several authors at the end of the 18th, during the 19th, and at the beginning of the 20th centuries.”

In addition to these non-biblical sources, of course there are the 27 New Testament historical documents, all of which mention Jesus. Details of Jesus’ death on a cross were clearly prophesied in the Old Testament and verified in the New Testament Gospels, Acts and most of the Epistles.

Second, He was buried. His burial in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea is further verification that He died.

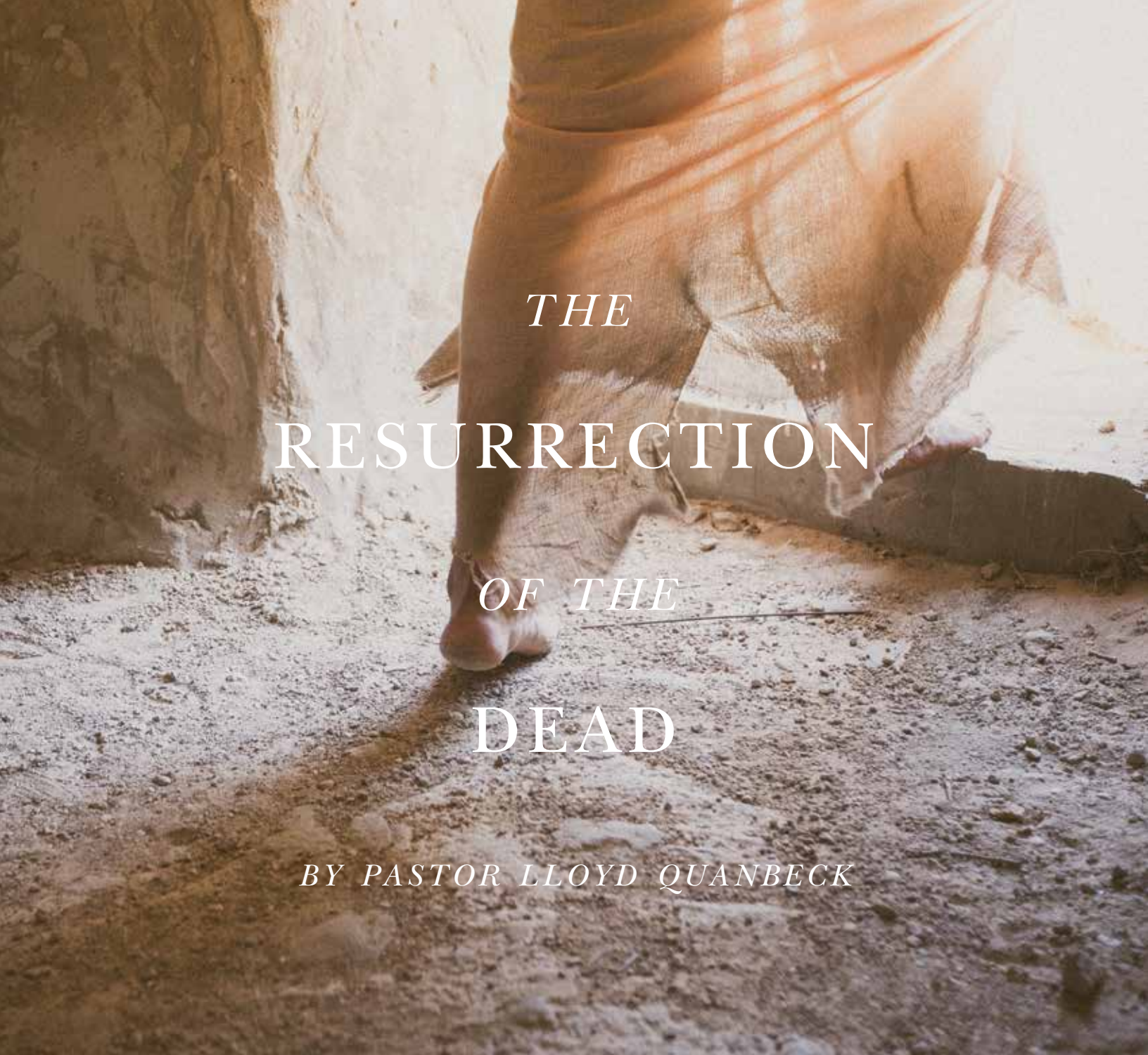
Third, He rose from the dead on the third day. The fact of Jesus’ resurrection from the grave is, of course, the message that Paul and the remaining 11 apostles dedicated the rest of their lives to proclaiming. And most of them died martyr’s deaths rather than deny the truth of the resurrection.

And last, He appeared to more than 500 people. His resurrection appearances to



so many left little chance of others perpetuating the lie that He really didn’t rise from the dead.

These firm facts of history are the basis for everything else in the Christian faith. Having reminded his readers of Jesus’ death, burial, resurrection, and appearances afterwards, Paul then goes on to declare that if these things are not true, then the rest of the Christian faith all collapses. To paraphrase Paul, our preaching is vain, your faith is vain, we are false witnesses of God, your faith is worthless, and you are still in your sins. Those who died believing in



THE
RESURRECTION
OF THE
DEAD

BY PASTOR LLOYD QUANBECK

Christ are lost. And we are of all men most to be pitied. We might as well live for the moment since that is all we may have.

If it were not for the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I would close up my shop as a pastor, because my preaching would be empty, as would my personal faith, I would be a liar—proclaiming false information as the Word of God. In addition, all of us would be without hope, still weighed down by the guilt of our individual sins, and I would have nothing to offer those who are facing death. What a truly pitiful lot we would be!

But Paul reminds the Corinthians, and us today as well, that such is not so. Christ has been raised from the dead, and this makes all the difference. I now have a life-changing message to proclaim each Sunday I get in the pulpit. Jesus is alive, and so your faith in Him is not empty. Because of Christ's death on the cross and resurrection from the dead, you are free from the guilt of your sins, and sin no longer needs to control you. In addition, you can know eternal life here and now, and anticipate a bodily resurrection someday and a great reunion with all others who die believing in Christ.

Because of Christ's resurrection, others will look to us and find hope for their lives now, and a confidence to face eternity, as well. What a joyful message we have to proclaim to the world this Easter and all year long.

May the words of Fanny Crosby's hymn encourage you today: "Redeemed, how I love to proclaim it! Redeemed by the blood of the Lamb; Redeemed thru His infinite mercy—His child, and forever, I am."

Quanbeck serves Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn.

52nd annual conference REGISTRATION

June 10-13, 2014, at Grace Free Lutheran Church, Valley City, N.D.

For a downloadable form, and for more information, go to www.aflc.org and click on "conferences"

First name: _____ Spouse (if attending): _____

Last name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-mail: _____

AFLC Congregation: _____

Other Congregation: _____

Membership (Check one)

You: _____ Rostered AFLC Pastor or serving AFLC church _____ Visiting Pastor _____ Lay Member _____ Lay Visitor

Spouse: _____ Rostered AFLC Pastor or serving AFLC church _____ Visiting Pastor _____ Lay Member _____ Lay Visitor

* Child designation is for those 12 and younger.

Meals	Adult	#	Child	#	Total
Tuesday lunch	\$13		\$6		\$
Wednesday Conference lunch	\$8		\$4		\$
Wednesday Chaplains lunch	\$8		n/a		\$
Wednesday Home Missions lunch	\$8		n/a		\$
Wednesday AFLBS Alumni lunch	\$8		n/a		\$
Wednesday Conference dinner	\$12		\$6		\$
Wednesday Schools Corporation dinner	\$12		n/a		\$
Thursday Missions Corporation breakfast	\$7		n/a		\$
Thursday Conference lunch	\$8		\$4		\$
Thursday ARC Corporation lunch	\$8		n/a		\$
Thursday Conference dinner	\$12		\$6		\$
Thursday Pastors' Banquet	\$20		n/a		\$
Friday FLAPS breakfast	\$7		n/a		\$
Friday Conference lunch	\$8		\$4		\$
Friday Foundation lunch	\$8		n/a		\$
Friday Conference dinner	\$12		\$6		\$
Total meals					\$
*Conference registration fee (\$35 single/\$50 couple)					\$
Total registration and meals					\$

*The registration fee is required for all attending the AFLC Conference. **Make checks payable to "AFLC" and mail to: AFLC, c/o Conference Registrations, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Plymouth, MN 55441. Registrations must be received by May 30.**



Having an impact, now

BY EMMA TWEDT

Saturday mornings are typically a lazy time in the week of an AFLBS student. Usually these hours are spent sleeping or lying in bed doing absolutely nothing. However, one snowy Saturday morning many girls were up early (lured by the promise of doughnuts and coffee) to attend the Women's Missionary Federation brunch held on campus. We got a delicious breakfast, but more importantly, we took away information about what the WMF is and updates on AFLC missions.

I knew about the WMF growing up, but I didn't really understand what it was about. I knew that once a month my mom spent an evening at church for WMF meetings, but what happened in those meetings was a mystery. It was good for me to learn about what the WMF actually does and how they work throughout the AFLC. After a time of worship, we saw a slide show explaining the different work that the WMF does to promote missions in the congregations and on a national and worldwide level. Each year, women in congregations across the AFLC hold Bible studies and have times of fellowship with other Christian women. The WMF also gives prayer and monetary support to both the World and Home Missions departments of the AFLC. After the slide show, Emily Raan gave a presentation about her journey into world missions and her upcoming work. She and her husband, Brent Raan (a student at the Free Lutheran Seminary), have visited India and

will travel again this summer as they prepare for mission work.

The following Monday night, representatives from the WMF came to the women's dorm devotional time, where Esther Hylden shared a devotional with us. We also learned about the different ways the WMF blesses us on the AFLBS campus. They provide us with supplies for our kitchen, furniture for the lounge areas, and artwork for the walls.

After growing up with a fuzzy mental picture of the WMF, it was good for me to get a clearer image of what it is and what it does. I was especially encouraged by the reminder that all of us are called to carry out God's words in Matthew 28:18-20, "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" I don't have to wait until I'm older or living somewhere else or in a different position in life to be a missionary. God uses all kinds of people and calls every one of us to be missionaries for Him, whether it is in India or in a small town in North Dakota.

Twedt, a member of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., is a junior at the Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Plymouth, Minn.



APRIL 15

WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

“And they said among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?”
(Mark 16:3).

Here come Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. They are walking slowly and talking quietly among themselves. Why, this seemed like a nightmare they had lived through. Their Lord had been cruelly crucified. He was dead. Their hopes were dashed. And today, the first day of the week, they carry the usual spices for anointing the dead, as they drag their feet closer to Joseph’s garden tomb. What a strange way everything has turned out—not at all as they had hoped and planned the Messiah to conquer and rule. They are bringing spices as they would to anoint anyone who had died. It did not seem right; what had gone wrong?

Here they come, closer up the path; and now one questions

softly, “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?” They seem convinced that some human help is needed to roll away the huge stone blocking the tomb’s entrance. But maybe, beneath the surface, they are really demonstrating their faith that they will not need to move the stone. If they had really thought that they would need a man’s help to roll away the stone, most likely they would have arranged for it before they left town to come out to this deserted garden. Perhaps they did remember the Lord’s promise that He would rise again in three days.

Avis Hoel Dyrud, Newfolden, Minn.

Waters in the Wilderness is a daily devotional published by the AFLC Board of Parish Education in 1971 with Dr. Iver Olson, editor. All 365 meditations were contributed by AFLC members from many walks of life. “Here, they offer each a glass of cool and refreshing water each day to thirsting souls,” wrote Olson in the preface. Reprinted by permission. The volume is out of print.

Jesus chooses to see us

BY KATELYN GUDIM

Jesus saw people. Jesus sees. These are words that I repeat to myself almost on a daily basis. While reading through Luke, I was struck with these simple words that held so much power. The first was when He called Peter, James, and John, “and He saw two boats by the lake” (Luke 5:2) and again when He called Matthew, “and saw a tax collector named Levi” (Luke 5:27). What struck me was that Jesus was surrounded by people, and yet He saw the individuals, first at the Sea of Galilee and then as a crowd had gathered to hear His teaching and witness the miraculous healing of the paralytic. In a third instance a man had died and the grieving party was moving through the town. The mother, a widower, was with a considerable crowd, and yet, “when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her” (Luke 7:13). Again in this chapter, Jesus asks Simon, “Do you see this woman?” (Luke 7:44). Jesus truly saw—the pain and hurt, the sin, the guilt, the longing for more—He saw everything.

I’m daily faced with crowds of people as I spend most of my time in a slum outside of Jinja, Uganda, called Masese. To be honest, I try to avoid many of them. This slum is made up of people from the north who have come down from the cattle-herding desert in hopes of finding a better life. They are from a tribe called the Karamojong and are known to be very tough. This slum is filled with physical death and disease at every turn, and many people can be found drunk at any given hour of the day. Masese is dark. Alcohol is brewed here, rape is rampant, poverty is widespread. In the words of my friends who stay there, “Masese is a place of problems. Karamojong are not easy.”

Recently, one of my dear friends came to know the Lord. What a blessing to be a part of that miracle! When I asked her what made the connection from simple words in Bible study to life-giving words that have transformed her completely, she said, “You saw me. You saw that I needed Jesus.”

While these words were a boost to my ego at first, I was humbled when I realized that it was Jesus who was doing the seeing through me. This woman is 18 years old with a 4-month-old



baby, and Jesus saw her 18 years ago. He just recently allowed me to start seeing her, too. Now, amongst the darkness that covers Masese, I see hope.

I know Jesus knows each and every hard, rough Karamojong who stays in Masese, but He chose to see my friend, Esther, in a tangible way that brought her to repentance and now incredible joy and peace in forgiveness. Esther now sees differently, as well, and I’m beyond excited to see who she is going to allow Jesus to have her see.

“It’s like I’m a missionary to Masese now, too.” These were the joyful words of Esther that have given me such hope. She speaks Karamojong, she knows the culture, these are her people. She’s a much more effective missionary there than I could ever hope to be, as she lives amongst the people and they can see that her life is now different. She can see people now, too.

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 15). Masese is dark and I often leave with a heavy heart, but the light is there. God is there. God sees, He knows, and He’s working. I’m so thankful to know He uses His children to see, too.

Gudim, a member of Grace Free Lutheran, Maple Grove, Minn., is a short-term missionary assistant with the AFLC serving in Jinja, Uganda. (Photo credit: Eileen Bach)

Supplies needed for 2014 fishing season at The Net

The Alaska Mission in Naknek, Alaska, is preparing once again for a summer of outreach through The Net. Part coffee shop, part refuge, The Net is open to visitors during the busy fishing season as a place to relax from work. Volunteers and missionaries with the Alaska Mission have used The Net as a way to meet the summer visitors and minister to their needs.

The project is in need of supplies for the 2014 fishing season. Those supplies include: flavored creamers, coffee filters (for 30-40 cup pot), hot chocolate packets, cookie mixes, vegetable oil, small paper plates, coffee stir sticks/straws, medium and large mixing bowls, gallon-sized Ziploc bags, Kleenex, 13-gallon trash bags, and liquid hand soap. There is also a need for Spanish and Tagalog Bibles, New Testaments, Gospels of John and tracts. Money can also be donated for fresh supplies such as butter and eggs.

A gift registry for this project is located at www.myregistry.com/organization/AFLC-Home-Missions-Alaska-Naknek-AK/337412.



New members installed at Faith Free, Minneapolis

New members were installed Feb. 23 at Faith Free Lutheran, Minneapolis. Pictured are (from left) Silas, Titus, Ryan, Jekka, Cedric, and Aria Stockman, Josiah Nelson, Kristin Fritz, Isaac and Naomi Paige, Zak Stromquist, Pastor Jason Gudim, and Andy and Jerilynn Alsdurf.

Housing options for the 2014 conference in Valley City, N.D.

The host committee for the 2014 Annual Conference have announced housing options available in the Valley City, N.D., area. The conference will be held June 10-13 at Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City.

Hotels and Motels

AmericInn

280 Winter Show Road
73 rooms blocked for AFLC or Grace Free; indoor hot tub and pool, fitness room, meeting room, complimentary breakfast, executive suites, cribs available.
701-845-5551 or 877-845-0007
www.americinn.com/hotels/ND/ValleyCity

Super 8

822 11th Street SW
30 rooms; family restaurant next door, outside outlets, cribs.
701-845-1140 or 800-800-8000.
www.super8.com

Wagon Wheel Inn

455 Winter Show Road
88 rooms; lounge, fitness room, meeting room, executive suites, laundry facilities,

complimentary continental breakfast.
701-845-5333 or 800-319-5333
www.wagonwheelinn.com

Valley City State University

Suites (2 rooms with a shared bathroom)
\$35/night for 1; \$28/night for 2
Linens are available for \$10.
Contact Kayla (701)845-7124
Email: housing@vcsu.edu

Bed & Breakfasts, Inns

Beste Mor Guest Inn

113 2nd Ave, Kathryn, ND
701-845-1995
www.mybestemor.com

Lakeside Bed & Breakfast

113 Lee's Subdivision, Lake Ashtabula
701-646-6759
\$110/night or \$750 week

Tower City Inn Bed & Breakfast

502 Church Street, Tower City
Contact Joanne: 701-749-2660
towerbedandbreakfast.com

President's House Guest Inn

VCSU campus
701-845-7122; www.presidentshouse.com

Sheyenne Riverbend Farm Inn

3716 117th Ave SE, Valley City
701-845-1377
www.riverbendfarm.com

Three Oaks Guest Inn

530 3rd St. SE, Valley City, ND
701-490-6000 or 701-845-4571

Victorian Charm Guest Inn

535 Central Ave N, Valley City, ND
701-845-0887; \$58 flat rate

Camping/RV Stations

Municipal Tourist park

Business Loop I-94
All hook-ups. Showers and water available.
701-845-3294

Wagon Wheel RV Park

I-94 exit 292, right on Winter Show Road
24 drive through sites with full hook-ups
701-845-5333 or 1-800-319-5333

When God calls

BY CASSIE MAIER

AFLC Home Missions recently partnered with AFLBS to offer a new format for Home Mission Parish Builder training. Senior Bible school students had the opportunity, January 6-17, to participate in a two-week, 20-hour elective called, “Dynamics of Serving within a Living Congregation.” The class was taught by Home Missions Director, Pastor Paul Nash.



Laying out time-tested biblical tools essential for effective service and leadership, this course emphasized working within a ministry team, Christian discipline, effective community outreach, and building long-term, disciple-making relationships. Eighteen students participated in the class.

Walking into the Parish Building class on the first day, I didn't know exactly what to expect. I did believe that the Holy

Spirit would work in my heart through the material presented, but little did I know that the Lord was going to call me to become a Parish Builder through it.

Each day in class we dug into God's Word, looking at figures in the Bible and studying how God used them to carry out His will. One passage that particularly stood out to me was Acts 9:10-19, which features an early church disciple name Ananias. The Scripture recounts how the Lord called to Ananias in a vision, instructing him to go and talk to Saul, who was nearby. Ananias

questioned the Lord, as he knew that Saul had brought much harm to the saints in Jerusalem. But the Lord told Ananias to go because He was going to use Saul as His instrument to carry His name before the Gentiles and the people of Israel. In obedience, Ananias went to Saul and carried the message the Lord had given him. Immediately, Saul was converted and baptized.

This passage got me thinking. What if Ananias hadn't listened to the Lord? What if he hadn't been obedient to God's calling? If Ananias wouldn't have gone to Saul, perhaps Saul wouldn't have been converted and then used by God to bring the gospel to the Gentiles. As I considered my own life, I pondered if I was listening to what God was calling me to do, and if I was following the path that the Lord has laid out before me.

Before taking this class, I had felt that God was calling me to Parish Building with AFLC Home Missions, but I thought it was impractical, and that I should go to college and get a degree first. Through this passage in Acts the Lord showed me that being in the center of God's will is the best place to be. God hasn't called Christians to live practical lives—He has called us to a higher standard of obedience; by being obedient to God's calling, we will bring glory and honor to His name.

I am so grateful that I was able to take this class, because through it God affirmed the calling in my life to be a Parish Builder by serving in a Home Mission congregation after I graduate from Bible school. I am excited to see the work that God is going to be doing in and through my life as a Parish Builder.

Maier, a senior at AFLBS, is a member of Bethel Lutheran, Faith, S.D.

AFLC memorials: February

AFLBS

Ovidie Dyrud (20)
Ruth Claus
Barb Root
Virgil Morris
Kenneth Nash (3)
Dennis and Ella Mae
Vogsland
Helen Dahl

AFLTS

Ovidie Dyrud (32)
Ida Marie Benson
Margery Bischoff
Helen Dahl
Kenneth Nash

General Fund

Kenneth Nash

HIS Fund

Pastor Dale Mellgren

Home Missions

Kenneth Nash
Geri Graham

Parish Education

Phyllis Knutson

World Missions

Kenneth Nash
Denise Kaiser
Ovidie Dyrud

Fargo congregation to celebrate 50 years

Members of St. Paul's Free Lutheran, Fargo, N.D., will celebrate the congregation's 50th anniversary on Sunday, June 8. AFLC President Lyndon Korhonen will preaching at the 10 a.m. Sunday service. A meal will be held after worship, and a Service of Celebration and Thanksgiving will follow at 1 p.m. All are welcome to attend.

Eggen was LFC lay leader

A funeral service for Chester Eggen, 102, was held Feb. 19 at Emmaus Lutheran, Bloomington, Minn. Past president of the Richfield State Bank and a lay leader in the former Lutheran Free Church, Eggen served on the Board of Administration (predecessor to the AFLC Coordinating Committee) and the Committee on Relations with Other Lutheran Bodies. He will also be remembered for serving as a special mentor to the Tentmakers Ministry. Several years ago his biblical convictions led him to transfer his membership from the congregation to which he had belonged for more than 50 years to Emmaus, which was a real homecoming for him. Blessed be his memory.

Schroeder served Tioga congregations

Pastor Gilbert Schroeder, 74, of Delaware, Ohio, died Jan. 29, 2014. He was born Dec. 5, 1939, in Cleveland. He graduated from high school in 1957 and earned a bachelor's degree in business from Bowling Green University. He served in the U.S. Air Force. Throughout his career, he worked as a programmer for IBM, with Arthur Anderson, and with BF Goodrich. He then felt a call to serve God and began seminary studies with the AFLC. He was ordained at Word of Life Church, Cleveland, in 1980, and served three churches in and around Tioga, N.D. He re-entered the public work force in 1987 and retired in 2007. He served as visitation pastor at his home congregation in Delaware until last fall.

Surviving are his wife, Carolyn (Blair) Schroeder, two daughters, Elizabeth (Jason) Damron of Ostrander, Ohio, and Christy Schroeder of Delaware, and one granddaughter. The service was held Feb. 2 in Delaware.

AFLTS gives internship assignments

Internship assignments were given for third-year seminary students heading into the 2014-15 school year. They include:

Daniel Antal: Trinity Free Lutheran, Grand Forks, N.D., with Pastor Terry Olson, supervisor.

Daniel Hurner: Our Savior's Free Lutheran, Stanley, N.D., and First English Lutheran of Lostwood, N.D., with Pastor Rodney Johnson, supervisor.

Jarrold Hylden: Maranatha Free Lutheran, Glyndon, Minn., with Pastor Lloyd Quanbeck, supervisor.

David Lusk: Abiding Savior Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., with Pastor Kurt Flaa, supervisor.

Bradley Novacek: Skreftsrud Lutheran, Beresford, S.D., and Redeemer Free Lutheran, Canton, S.D., with Pastor John Mundfrom, supervisor.

Nathan Olson: Ruthfred Evangelical Lutheran, Bethel Park, Pa., with Pastor Steve Carlson, supervisor.

Brent Raan: Living Word Free Lutheran, Sioux Falls, S.D., with Pastor Wade Mobley, supervisor, and AFLC World Missions (six months each).

Ryan Tonneson: St. Paul's Lutheran, Cloquet, Minn., with Pastor Jerome Nikunen, supervisor.

George Winston: St. John's Lutheran, Newark, Ohio, with Pastor Thomas Olson, supervisor.

Church meets needs with giveaway

Members of St. Petrie Evangelical Lutheran Church, Leland Ill., held a free giveaway day Feb. 15. Gently used clothing, toys, and household items were given away to folks in a three-county area. People were greeted and offered gospel tracks, a friendly smile, and a warm cup of coffee with some cookies. The event, called Helping Hands, Loving Hearts, was a wonderful opportunity to reach out and share Christ with others and have fellowship with church members. Congregation members are planning another free giveaway day August 9.

People and places

Pastor Manfred Kurschner, Frontier, Saskatchewan, has announced his retirement as pastor of Bethel Lutheran Church. He and his wife, Renate, plan to make their new home at Stewart Valley, Saskatchewan.

AFLC BENEVOLENCES Jan. 1-Feb. 28, 2014

FUND	REC'D IN FEBRUARY	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$24,553	\$61,265	\$60,974
Evangelism	8,019	22,061	26,084
Youth Ministries	8,430	17,863	25,704
Parish Education	8,410	19,802	19,667
Seminary	16,486	44,666	39,658
Bible School	17,758	54,308	66,174
Home Missions	26,083	58,951	77,653
World Missions	23,357	71,985	81,432
Personal Support	42,900	78,786	78,775
TOTALS	\$175,997	\$429,687	\$476,122

Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.

Faithful to the faith

The first Christians were encouraged to “continue in the faith,” and the congregations were being “strengthened in the faith” (Acts 14:22 and 16:5). Paul called upon the Corinthians in his first letter to them to “stand firm in the faith” (16:13), and upon the Philippians to strive together “for the faith of the gospel,”

(1:27). He wrote to the Colossians of “the faith firmly established and steadfast” (1:23). He writes to Timothy in his first letter of those who have “a high standing and great confidence

in the faith that is in Christ Jesus” (3:13), but warns against those who “fall away from the faith” (4:1), who have “denied the faith” (5:8) and “wandered away from the faith” (6:10). The writer of the Book of Jude appeals to his fellow believers to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints” (v.3).

What does the Word of God mean when “faith” is preceded by the article “the”? It is a strong reminder that faith has *content*. There are numerous scriptural references where faith means our personal trust in Jesus Christ, which is a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9, for example). But the references above highlight the fact that “the” faith means *what* we believe.

It is encouraging to read the results of surveys indicating that faith convictions are an important reason why people choose a congregation. But a similar study several years ago suggested that the main considerations were three words also beginning with the letter “f” ... friends, fellowship, and fun.

If faith convictions are important to

you—they are for this writer, and should be for us all, since God’s Word says they are—then these are a few questions to be asked about the faith of any congregation that one would consider:

What do you believe about sin? Is it a condition in which we are born, is it something we are by nature, or does it only consist of wrong things that we choose to do? Do you believe that everyone has a core of goodness? Do you believe that a sinless life is possible? (These questions, by the way, clearly connect to one’s convictions about infant baptism.)

What do you believe about salvation? Is everyone “some sort of Christian,” or do you believe in the possibility and necessity of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ? Do you believe that God did His part by sending His Son to be our Savior, and that we do our part by believing in Him? Can salvation be lost? Is salvation kept by our works? What do you mean by grace?

Are baptism and the Lord’s Supper actions of obedience for me to do or means of grace through which God does something to me?

What do you believe about the Bible? Is it the Word of God? Or does it contain the Word of God? Or is it merely a collection of inspirational stories and helpful instruction which would make the world a better place if people followed it? Is it a means of grace?

What do you believe about Jesus? Though other questions could and perhaps

should be asked, this one is primary. When Paul summarized his faith convictions—his gospel message—in his first letter to the Corinthians, he declared that the following were of “first importance”: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried and raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (15:3-4). He then lists post-resurrection appearances of Christ, followed by his defense of

If faith convictions are important to you ... then these are a few questions to be asked about the faith of any congregation that one would consider.

our future resurrection, for “if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain” (vs. 13-14).

It is the Lenten and Easter message that Paul received and delivered to the Corinthian congregation. It is the gospel, the good news, which is delivered to us through the Word of God, for surely we did not miss the repetition of the phrase, “according to the Scriptures.” This is our core faith conviction. At times we speak of primary and secondary teachings, yet this should never minimize the fact that “the faith” includes all that Holy Scriptures teach, all that God has spoken.

For this we contend, on this we stand firm. Faithfully.



Pastor Robert Lee

association retreat center

Watch and pray

BY PASTOR KARL ANDERSON

In Matthew 26 we read the story of Jesus praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. As He stepped aside to pray by Himself, He told the disciples who were with Him, “Watch with me.”

To be on watch is a special responsibility. The watchman must keep alert while others sleep, to protect them from the dangers of the night. It’s a practice that we find commonly employed throughout history. Ships at sea, soldiers on patrol, even cowboys riding herd set a watch by assigning a person to be on alert while the others rest. To fall asleep while on watch is a grave offense, betraying the trust given to the watchman.

The watchman must be observant, looking for subtle changes in the shadows and sounds of the night in order to identify potential dangers while they are still far off. He must also know the territory well enough to recognize which sights and sounds are normal in order to avoid raising a false alarm.

The watchman must be responsive, raising the alarm when danger arises so that others may join him in protecting the vulnerable and achieving their mission.

When Jesus found the disciples sleeping instead of watching, He added to the instruction, saying to them, “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41, ESV).

How might you be watchful in a world where every one of the Ten Commandments is under assault? Our first defense is to be alert and recognize our weaknesses. Rather than saying with prideful self-assurance, “I’d never do that,” when we see someone sin, we should recognize our own vulnerability. As Jesus admonished, “The

spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” Ask God to keep you from the opportunity to sin. Remember, the easiest temptation to overcome is the one you never get a chance to do.

Like the watchman, be observant. Get to know the territory so you recognize danger when it approaches. Review the Ten Commandments. Study their meanings in *Luther’s Small Catechism*. Read the Bible accounts of men and women who faced temptation, noting the contrast between those who prevailed and those who gave in.

Then, raise the alarm when temptation is seen approaching. Pray! Ask God for a new path that leads away from temptation. It may mean limiting access to TV or the Internet. Maybe credit cards need to be cut up. Perhaps volunteering for a new responsibility at church will occupy your time with more productive tasks.

If you have given in to temptation all is not lost. Three times that night Jesus found His disciples sleeping instead of watching. He did not send them away. The story did not end in the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus went to the cross to die for their sins ... and for mine ... and for yours. Through faith in Jesus we can find forgiveness. Finally, Jesus rose from the dead on Easter morning with the promise of new life for all who believe in Him. I John 1:9 summarizes the biblical solution to sin: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Anderson, a member of the ARC Corporation, serves Alida and Rice Lutheran churches, Bagley, Minn.